



EMBASSY of COLOMBIA

W A S H I N G T O N

Para Publicación Inmediata
Febrero 9 de 2011

Contacto: Martha Jensen
202-234-6638

Colombia Agradece Comentarios del Embajador Kirk Acerca de Intención de la Administración de Avanzar el Tratado de Libre Comercio con Colombia

Washington, D.C. – La Embajada de Colombia hoy agradeció los comentarios de Ron Kirk, Representante de Comercio de E.E.U.U. acerca del Tratado de Libre Comercio entre los Estados Unidos y Colombia (TLC) en su testimonio frente al Comité de Impuestos de la Cámara de Representantes (House Ways and Means Committee). El Embajador de Colombia en los Estados Unidos, Gabriel Silvia, emitió el siguiente comunicado:

“Agradecemos los comentarios del Embajador Kirk acerca de la intención de la Administración del Presidente Obama de avanzar en la negociación del tratado este año. Durante las ultima semanas, dicha administración ah expresado su compromiso con el TLC, y nos complace saber que hay disposición para avanzar en el trabajo relacionado con este acuerdo. Colombia valora la larga alianza diplomática y económica que mantiene con los Estados Unidos, y esta lista para seguir adelante.

“También aplaudimos el llamado de el Embajador Kirk al Congreso a favor de una prórroga de las Preferencias Comerciales Andinas tan pronto como sea posible. Estas preferencias vencen el próximo sábado, y de no darse una acción en el Congreso, muchas de las industrias Colombianas que han sido afectadas por las consecuencias de las inundaciones sufrirán un daño económico mayor. Es nuestra esperanza que el Congreso apruebe esta legislación inmediatamente y extienda estas preferencias en los próximos días.

“Con respectó a los comentarios hechos durante la audiencia acerca de los derechos humanos y laborales en Colombia, rechazamos la noción de que Colombia ha hecho poco para progresar en esta cuestión de importancia crítica. La sugerencia que durante los últimos años Colombia ha permanecido de brazos cruzados y no ha dado pasos agresivos para proteger los derechos humanos y laborales de la población y para mejorar los derechos de los sindicatos y el estado de derecho, no están basados en información real. A menudo es conveniente usar argumentos viejos basados en el pasado de Colombia, pero la Colombia de hoy es un país diferente, y es el momento de que Colombia reciba valoración y reconocimiento basados en esta realidad.

“Que quede bien claro que la Administración del Presidente Santos le da una prioridad muy alta a la protección de los derechos humanos y laborales. Durante los últimos años, Colombia ha dado múltiples pasos para asegurar que todos los ciudadanos Colombianos gocen de derechos humanos esenciales. Hemos implementado una serie de leyes, modernizado y reformado nuestro sistema judicial, y aumentado recursos para la protección de los segmentos vulnerable de nuestra población. Constantemente recibimos reconocimiento internacional por estos esfuerzos del ILO, la ONU, y de otras naciones del mundo, incluyendo los Estados Unidos. Pero lo mas importante, y por encima de todo, hemos tomado estas medidas para mejorar nuestro país y para continuar nuestro camino hacia el progreso y la prosperidad.

Para más información acerca de los pasos que Colombia ha tomado para proteger los derechos humanos y laborales de su población, por favor consulte la hoja informativa adjunta.



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COLOMBIA: IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY UPDATE FROM THE EMBASSY OF COLOMBIA

February 10, 2011

Did You Know...

Extending Andean Trade Preferences Would Provide a Needed Boost to Colombian Industries Facing Unprecedented Economic Turmoil from Epic Floods

The Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) is set to expire on Saturday, February 12. Trade preferences are central to Colombia's continued economic growth, as they benefit key sectors of the Colombian economy that are currently facing the worst environmental and economic disaster in a generation. Preferences lower the cost of inputs for U.S. manufacturers, not to mention that they also ease the import of the millions of cut flowers that will be sent and delivered on Valentine's Day, but Congress has yet to approve legislation that would extend funding for ATPDEA.

This week Colombian Ambassador to the United States Gabriel Silva sent a letter to every Member of Congress, urging them to extend preferences before the February 12 expiration date. He wrote:

"I have recently returned from Colombia, and witnessed first-hand the ongoing natural disaster that has had a devastating impact on our people and our economy....[W]e urge Congress to help us to sustain our economic stability by extending the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act.... Failure to extend these vital preferences would cause significant damage to numerous Colombian economic sectors, resulting in significant job losses at a time when Colombia can least afford it."

Ambassador Silva also released a statement following yesterday's House Ways and Means Committee hearing on trade, which read in part:

"... [W]ithout action by Congress, many of the Colombian industries that have been devastated by the aftermath of the epic floods, stand to suffer further economic harm. It is our hope that Congress will immediately approve legislation extending preferences in the coming days."

To read the full text of the letter, visit <http://tinyurl.com/66uynhl>. To read the full statement, visit <http://tinyurl.com/4r4zfqq>. Below are excerpts from related news articles.

The New York Times

"No Way to Run a Trade Policy" (Editorial)

February 3, 2011

"The preferences...provide duty-free access to many imports from Colombia, Ecuador and Peru as part of a strategy to combat the cocaine trade by creating jobs in other export industries. The Andean bill is a core part of the nation's counternarcotics policy... The Andean preferences and the Trade Adjustment Assistance program were extended until Feb. 12 as a stopgap measure. They will expire unless both the House and the Senate vote to extend them before then."

To read the full text, visit:
<http://tinyurl.com/6ckkbt6>

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

"A Fatal Friendship? – U.S. Politics Threatens to Devastate Colombia's Economy" (Editorial)

December 17, 2010

"The ATPDEA, which gives Colombian exporters access to U.S. markets, is set to expire...Its end will devastate Colombian export industries—from apparel and food preparations to cut flowers—that rely heavily on the U.S. market. Colombia estimates that in the cut flower industry alone more than 1,000 companies would be affected. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says that the cut flower industry generates more than 200,000 jobs in Colombia...[and] generate another 200,000 jobs in the U.S. in distribution and retail industries."

To read the full text, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/4cg6bwn>

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Colombia Welcomes Ambassador Kirk's Remarks on Administration's Intent to Advance U.S.-Colombia Trade Agreement

Washington, D.C. – The Embassy of Colombia today welcomed remarks regarding the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA) made by U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk in his testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee. Colombian Ambassador to the United States Gabriel Silva released the following statement:

"We welcome Ambassador Kirk's remarks regarding the Obama Administration's intent to move the trade agreement forward this year. Over the past few weeks, the Administration has expressed its commitment to the FTA, and we are pleased that there is a willingness to advance the agreement. Colombia values the longstanding diplomatic and economic alliance we maintain with the United States, and we stand ready to move forward."

"We also applaud Ambassador Kirk's calling on Congress to extend Andean trade preferences as soon as possible. They are set to expire on Saturday, and without action by Congress, many of the Colombian industries that have been devastated by the aftermath of the epic floods, stand to suffer further economic harm. It is our hope that Congress will immediately approve legislation extending preferences in the coming days."

"With respect to remarks made during the hearing regarding human and labor rights in Colombia, we reject the notion that Colombia has done little to make progress on these critically important issues. To suggest that for years Colombia has stood idly by and not taken aggressive steps to protect human and labor rights, and enhance union rights and the rule of law, are claims not based on current facts. Often it is convenient to leverage old arguments based on Colombia's past, but the Colombia of today is a different nation, and it is time for Colombia to receive a fresh assessment and recognition based on that reality."

"Let it be abundantly clear that the Santos Administration places a very high priority on protecting human and labor rights. As a nation, over the past many years, we have taken numerous steps to ensure that all Colombian citizens are afforded essential human rights. We have implemented a series of laws, modernized and reformed our judicial framework, and increased resources to protect vulnerable segments of the population. We consistently receive international recognition for these efforts from the ILO, the UN and nations around the world, including the United States. Most importantly and above all, we have made these strides to better our country and continue on our path to progress and prosperity."

For more information on Colombia's steps to protect human and labor rights, please see the attached fact sheet.

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